Review: Guardian of the Dead

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Welcome once again to the AVEN news roundup. In this issue we look at recent research requests, articles and media appearances, as well as the growing asexual resources outside AVEN. As ever, all the points covered here have been taken from the AVEN Digest (January/February editions), which contain links for further information.

With the continued use of the forums by students and researchers conducting surveys on various aspects of asexuality, the Project Team have been preparing a set of official rules governing these surveys in order to protect AVENites and to allow the findings to be shared. Any feedback from site members regarding these rules would be appreciated.

Current research requests include studies on asexual identities and the definition of asexuality, while another aims to differentiate between asexuality and Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (HSDD). There are also two London-based projects conducting research, one for a documentary and the other for a play featuring romantic asexuals in lead roles.

Often requests posted on AVEN have led to newspaper and magazine articles. Recent interviews have appeared in Good Vibrations and Her Campus magazines, as well as the New York University student newspaper, while in other media, AVENite GirlDreamer appeared on the Norwegian television show Juntafil, and Phoenix9 and Coleslaw were featured on a Valentine's Day special edition of the Discovery Channel's The Science of Lust series.

Asexual visibility also comes about from educational workshops. AVENite Siggy is hosting one at the Western Regional LGBTQIA College Conference in the US on [date] March, entitled “Asexuals: who are they, and why should you care?” Education is an important part of visibility, and is made easier by references to AVEN and/or asexuality in textbooks, for example the latest edition of Exploring the Dimensions of Human Sexuality.

Increasingly a part of asexual visibility and community are blogs, vlogs, podcasts and online groups. Since the start of 2011, new online resources include an AVEN group on Steam!, an asexual news site, a facebook group for aromantics and a new website aimed at promoting an asexual social scene. Showing the huge diversity among asexuals, a blog carnival has been organised, focussing on autism and asexuality, and a new educational blog, Temporary Sanity, based around various aspects of gender and sexuality, also features articles on asexuality. Lastly, AVENite Poetic. Love has started a new YouTube video series on asexuality, and popular YouTube channel Hot Pieces of Ace has been recruiting new vloggers.
Childhood Innocence

It was quiet outside; the only sound was an occasional car going by, the sound of the tires moving through slush and snow. I sat staring outside at the kids playing, shrieking laughter filling the air as they lobbed snowballs at each other and tumbled over half-made snow forts. I wanted to be out there with them, but a gentle clearing of a throat behind me made me turn my attention from the window back to the one I had called here in the first place.

“We need to talk.” His voice was serious and I rubbed at my forehead, the start of a familiar headache forming as I tried to ignore a twist of painful guilt. I knew where this was going and I didn’t want to travel that road. Not again, not now.

I stared at the ground, not wanting to meet his eyes. Sure, we could talk-then we’d laugh about it later, how I was shy and hurt and needed more time. We’d play another round of DDR, walk somewhere or talk about how hard class and work was that day. But something inside me said I wouldn’t like where this particular talk was going.

“This isn’t working out.”

My head snapped up at that and I stared at him, feeling my eyes widen with shock. Not working out? I thought we were doing fine. “What do you mean?” I blurted out. “I thought… I mean… aren’t you happy? Don’t we have a good time together?” He sighed and I wished I could read his thoughts, to try and see what was going on behind the stilted words. “Look, I thought I could give you time; I knew about you and what you went through…” He sighed and I wished I could read his thoughts, to try and see what was going on behind the stilted words. “Look, I thought I could give you time; I knew about you and what you went through…”

At that, I grew angry and I stood up, arms crossing against my chest defensively. “You very well know that has nothing to do with it,” I snapped. “Well, I assumed, okay?” he snapped back.

“I thought… I mean, it isn’t normal to not want… I mean,” he flushed and looked away for a moment. “I mean, you stare at those kids and you don’t mind me stroking your hair, but every time we try and get closer, you joke or push away and go back to playing whatever kid game you have stashed away in here.”

He gave me a pleading look. “It’s not normal to not even think about it…” He closed his eyes. “I want to give us another chance, but I want… I mean…” His expression firmed. “I’ve already made an appointment with this therapist; she’s really good at…”

He stopped and I wondered what my expression said to make him back off like that, one hand clenching in his lap and a hint of shame on his face. I just knew that it hurt, the pain that he didn’t actually understand when I thought he had, that there went another person who thought I was broken, that a few talks with some stranger would ‘fix’ me so that I’d want to have that type of relationship.

“I could feel my body shaking. “I… no. If that’s what you think, I … I guess we really can’t make it work.” There went a friend, a love-someone close that understood me and parts of me that I gave away were gone for good.

He stood slowly as well, a hand reaching out as he stroked my hair.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered. “I just can’t keep on waiting for you if you’re never going to come.” With that farewell, he grabbed his coat and scarf and I closed my eyes, not wanting to watch as he left. The sound of the door shutting firmly behind him echoed for a moment, then tramping footsteps moving away.

I sank back into my chair and stared at the children again, wishing I could be a part of their group; where no one would expect anything less of me than games and innocent affection. I wondered if I ever would find someone that could see me as I was.
A Negative

The Sink of Solitude

Sometimes it feels like the majority of Western culture is dedicated to the quest of avoiding being alone. Countless books, movies and comics tell us that there is no greater drive than the one to find companionship, and hopefully the “right” one. Even the characters in Disney movies, who supposedly have no body parts under their clothes, are mostly driven by the quest for this amazing goal that everybody shares. Because love conquers all and so on...

But we know that it isn’t that simple and there are a lot of us who don’t share that drive.

Some people have even accused me of being a terribly selfish person, because I don’t want a human companion and children. They argue that my life has no meaning if I’m not going to contribute to the happiness of someone else and the growth of the species.

So I guess that if I choose to try and make the world a better place and bring happiness to people through other means, I’m a monster. It doesn’t count when I create a new work of art that people take pleasure from or even when I try to promote Asexual Visibility to make life a lot easier for people who might be asexual, but have never heard of it and therefore they haven’t even considered it a possibility. All that matters is that I have a domestic partner and preferably children. I guess all the single and childless artists, scientist and leaders from the history are just as useless, regardless of their contributions to society.

“You cured a deadly disease and saved countless lives?” asks the average ignorant person. “Well, that’s all well and good, but are you married and do you have children? No? How tough for you, I’m afraid that your life is completely meaningless.”

Sounds scary, but unfortunately that happens, and a lot more than you’d like to think.

A very frequent bad response from someone when you come out as aromantic is something like: “But you’ll be so lonely when you grow old and you’ll die alone!” Sometimes this is said with concern, sometimes with arrogance and sometimes with anger. This is a sentiment I’ve even heard from other asexuals sometimes.

Yes, I get it that they’re projecting. They find that the idea of being alone all throughout their lives to be so abysmal that they assume the same must be true for everybody else as well. But why is it so hard to understand that some people have absolutely no need for companionship in this sense? I am alone practically all day, every day and I’ve never felt lonely in my life. The entire concept is somewhat foreign to me. Should I be equally as angry and confrontational about people who do have that need for companionship?

“So, you can’t be alone? I’d say that makes you a co-dependent a**hole!”

As entertaining as the prospect might seem at first glance, I see no point.

Which brings me to the question: Why is being alone associated with romantic relationships anyway? Don’t these people have friends? And why the assumption that I’ll be unable to make friends if I should start feeling lonely at some point when I get old? Is there a cut-off point after which you’re not allowed to make any? Is that why I should feel bad about being alone now? The logic escapes me.

If I should die alone, I can’t see that as being a bad thing in any way. It probably means that I have lived my life as it feels the most comfortable to me. Alone and in peace. If I should die with a large family, something must’ve gone terribly wrong at some point and I probably would’ve been miserable. But for some reason, the first case is automatically assumed to be a negative outcome and the latter a great triumph. And while I understand that that indeed is the case for the majority of people, I’m still somewhat annoyed by the assumption.

So the next time you hear about someone kicking the bucket in their apartment so alone that their body is not found for a long time, don’t necessarily feel bad about it. Maybe that’s exactly how they wanted it to be and it’s a testament to their choices in life. Feel bad for the people who have to clean it all up instead.
Featured Meetup:
Vancouver, 12th February
Review written by: Charaxes

Being the new kid on the AVEN block, I was pretty nervous about organizing a meetup. However, I knew it was something I really wanted to try. Now that it’s over, I’m very glad I did it. The whole process really helped me connect with some cool asexy people in my area. I definitely want to meet more in person so I’m continuing to host more meetups.

My first meetup was pretty low-key. Just a few of us in a coffee shop. Which in hindsight was good, as it was less intimidating for everyone that way. We talked a good two hours about anything from our personal lives to simple things like movies and music. I won’t lie; the whole experience was a bit awkward at first, but we were all cool with one another by the end.

For anyone out there contemplating organizing a meetup, my advice is “go for it!” You’ve got nothing to lose but quite possibly some good friends to gain.

In the pipeline (see the Meetup Mart for more details):

5th March: New York City
12th March: Chicago (US)
19th March: Vancouver (Can)
19th March: Derbyshire walking meet (UK)
19th-20th March: RHS Flower Show (UK)
20th March: San Francisco (US)
26th March: Nottingham (UK)
1st-3rd April: Asexy Dirty Weekend no. V, Bath (UK)
29th April – 2nd May: Camping trip (UK)

Note: If you do meet people from the internet, please remember to keep safe and meet in a public place. Tell some friends where you are going and when you expect to be back, and make sure you have taxi fare in case of an emergency.

Please submit your meetup photos and/or reviews to newsletter@asexuality.org
Artwork

Both pieces by:
Synergy

Have some artwork?
Send it to newsletter@asexuality.org
The Dirty Weekend Phenomenon

You wouldn’t see a row of asexuals in their pyjamas curled on the sofas spooning ice-cream in a darkened room and watching a movie together anywhere, other than at an Asexy Dirty Weekend. And past midnight they’re still sitting lazily and laughing at nothing in particular. Then one by one or together, they go to bed. But you can still hear laughter in the silence of the night.

“It’d never work”

“It would never work Joshua,” said one of my asexy friends, nodding, when I said that I was planning a weekend away that’d cost participants at least £100 each. “People on AVEN often struggle with a £10 train fare to travel to an ordinary meet.” This is very true, and, on the face of it, it seemed ludicrous to offer a weekend in a community that consists predominantly of students and younger people at junior levels in their careers. It unequivocally defied common sense.

The Dirty Weekend concept wasn’t a promising one to start with. Finalised at a central London café one afternoon in December 2008, it was a month later that the first one was announced and consisted of a stay-over, a barbeque and a paintball. It was the most heavily marketed meet-up ever, with advertisements appearing in the AVENues magazine as well as being promoted at meet-ups across the country. Despite the heavy marketing, apart from myself and Emily, the two original conspirators, no-one came forward for the stay at the country cottage that we hired. Paintball attracted just one other person, McPhail. Another five people joined in the daytime activities to go sightseeing in the historic city of Bath, as an alternative to paintball. They stayed over, but in different accommodation that was markedly cheaper, 6 miles away.

After an exhilarating day at paintball, Emily, McPhail and I met the five sightseers in the city of Bath and then headed to our rural country cottage. The eight of us enjoyed a superb evening barbeque; we played games, talked and laughed. The following day, we were joined by a few others and lunched al-fresco in a park and went on a boat-trip. The weekend was lauded by those who attended as well as those who didn’t. Those who didn’t attend could see the countless photographs that were posted on the thread - so much so that there was an immediate clamour for another.

An instant hit

Work to arrange another weekend away started almost instantaneously and Asexy Dirty Weekend 2 was announced. The theme was motor-sports and was chosen after two people mentioned their preference for quad biking. The four-bedroom cottage I hired with a capacity of 8 was filled quickly, and there was no need to advertise any rooms; this was a marked contrast to the lack of interest we had in Bath. RainbowAmoeba explains the appeal “I had attended the first Asexy Dirty Weekend in June and had really enjoyed myself there, so I decided to attend the second event as soon as it was announced.”

At the 2nd Asexy Dirty Weekend, we had a thrilling day with motorsports. Quad biking was immense fun, and off-road Go-Karting was even more so; keeping these speedy karts on the tracks, which were rough and unyielding, was immensely hard.
work. Even a short 10 minute race leaves your arms aching as you struggle with the rough terrain. For many of us, this was the first time we’d participated in these types of motor sports. One of our contingent commented “I just wouldn’t have the opportunity to do this otherwise; my non-asexual friends aren’t interested.”

It’s a different type of interaction at a Dirty Weekend; you interact with people while cooking vegetables, cooking dinner, playing games on the carpet as well as during activities. You may be talking to your room-mate at bedtime, discussing the movie you’ve watched together. You get to know one another in a more in depth way in a calmer, relaxed setting. OperaGhost comments “If I had to sum up how I felt about the weekend, it would be that it felt as if we were one big family. I’d never felt so relaxed with people, some of whom I’d only known for a few hours. I’ve not laughed so much in ages.” OperaGhost does however admit to being a little nervous beforehand, despite having attended day-time meets previously. He’s attended two Asexy Dirty Weekends, and is booked to attend his third in April 2011. RainbowAmoeba regularly travels from France, and she describes the appeal: “We were all staying together at the same cottage and had many opportunities to engage in various activities together, from cooking to playing games or commenting on whatever was on TV, and therefore to interact with each other and get to know one another. I really felt I had spent the weekend with a group of friends, although most of the other guests were people I had never met before.”

A striking feature is that we get people who are vastly different in their hobbies, interests, lifestyles and backgrounds. The ages were 22-55 and people of all ages interacted well; no age-based issues were discernible, which is the case for all UK meet-ups.

I’m somewhat taken aback by the appeal and success of these weekends. The next event in April 2011 - costing £112 for just accommodation and food - sold out all 8 places within a week of the details being released. And those attending aren’t all in employment; some are students or voluntary workers who don’t have a regular income. Some would save for weeks to be able to attend. In the UK, a meet-up that costs more than £20 would be expected to fail or to attract a very small number, but the Asexy Dirty Weekends seem to consistently defy this rule.

The inner workings

Critical to the success of these weekends is gaining participation from attendees with good skill sets. It is essential to have people who are socially confident and can make others feel at ease and comfortable. Also, you do need people with good cooking skills and those who can plan and organise activities. I give precedence to someone who can design and lead a quiz. Now, when there are fewer places than demand, it’s becoming difficult to accommodate everyone and for the next weekend, I’ve gone over
my limit. In determining who is granted a place, I’ve used ability to contribute or previous contributions as the selection criterion, stipulating that attendees must contribute in some significant way by either cooking, running a quiz, leading a game or activity or by performing domestic duties. This doesn’t preclude new people, as first-timers are granted places on the contribution they’ve assured.

Behind the scenes, there is a great deal of work to be done. Finding a suitable cottage can take weeks as not all venues can provide single beds in all rooms; most cottages have double beds only. The cottages must be located in close proximity to rail stations and activity centres. If one is found to meet these criteria, it may not be vacant for the weekend we’d like, so the search starts again. Then there’s negotiating prices and agreeing the terms and conditions. After that, booking activities such as quad biking and paintball, and making the necessary transport arrangements. Granting places to the participants isn’t quite straightforward as people do have preferences about whom they’d like to share rooms with; some girls would prefer to share with another girl and some late risers would prefer to share with another late riser. Then it’s gathering dietary preferences and ensuring that a thorough food list is compiled. Attendees also need to be provided with good directions and maps and taxi journeys do need co-ordination.

Paintball fun

Intimate social gathering

Having organised four Asexy Dirty Weekends and a Valentine’s weekend, I now realise that it’s not the activities such as paintball, canoeing or quad biking that hold the greatest appeal: it’s the socialising and being able to spend quality time in an intimate social setting with fellow asexuals. Conventional meets don’t offer this type of socialisation opportunity, as they’re held in public places and are of a few hours in duration. At Asexy Dirty Weekends, conversations and laughter in the living room go into the small hours at night; they take place in the garden over tea as well as in the kitchen during food preparation. There is good home-cooked food in abundance as well as activities, games and movies to suit different tastes. One of the highlights is everyone having dinner together round a big table.

The success of the Asexy Dirty Weekends isn’t attributable to me more than anyone else, because it’s the participants and their creative input and ideas that have made them such resounding successes.

The 5th Asexy Dirty Weekend in April 2011 promises to be the most spectacular to date and will have a varied schedule that includes paintball, country-walking and a “chocolate night", where we aim to indulge in the most exquisite chocolate from the finest chocolatiers in the country. There are also cooking and baking classes as well as indoor and outdoor games. It has the highest number staying over, and some people were turned away as it was full to capacity. It is a real shame that I can’t extend this event to all those who’d like to participate, but by sharing my thoughts here, I hope that it provides others inspiration and that asexual communities outside the UK can experience the exhilaration and enjoyment that we do.
Review: Guardian of the Dead
by Karen Healey

Review by: Yamx

Guardian of the Dead by Karen Healey was published in 2010. It’s a YA novel about Ellie Spencer, a boarding school student in Christchurch (the New Zealand city recently hit by a devastating earthquake), who one day awakens to the fact that there’s a magical world interwoven with ours, that she’s part of it, and that there are evil forces trying to take her best friend, her life, and, ultimately, the entire North Island.

The book has won several awards, including 2011 Best Book For Young Adults (American Library Association). It’s been variously classified as thriller, urban fantasy and horror, and it does contain elements of all these genres. It’s also steeped in a rich background of Maori folklore – the source of much of the magic in the book.

What makes the book especially interesting for asexuals, though, is that it contains what is probably the only explicitly asexual character in a YA novel, and one of the very few aces in the media: Ellie’s best friend Kevin.

Kevin attends the same boarding school Ellie does. They’ve only known each other for a few months, since Ellie transferred, but have fast become best friends who talk about everything. So it’s hardly surprising that Ellie is the first person Kevin comes out to.

We don’t see the actual coming-out conversation – it takes place just before the start of the novel, late at night – after quite a few drinks, in Ellie’s dorm room. What we do see is their slightly awkward but heartwarming follow-up conversation the next day.

Ellie is clearly new to the concept of asexuality, but she truly cares about Kevin and doesn’t want to say the wrong thing. She deduces what to say and what not to say by paralleling the situation to her lesbian sister’s coming out to their parents. (It didn’t go too well, so Ellie tries to avoid making the same mistakes her father did.) In a later scene, Ellie is waiting in the car while Kevin comes out off-screen to another friend – a conversation he’s been quite anxious about, since he suspects that friend of being romantically interested in him. Ellie’s shown worrying about all the ways this could go wrong. (It doesn’t.)
And that’s pretty much it. These are the only scenes where Kevin’s asexuality is the main point, and even those are mostly used to illustrate his relationship to the protagonist.

This may not seem like a lot, and some readers have expressed disappointment that Kevin’s asexuality isn’t discussed more. However, one can also view that as actually refreshing: here we have an asexual character, and it’s just one aspect of who he is, not something that defines his entire plot arc. Asexuality is treated as a normal characteristic that can sometimes be awkward to talk about, not something that has to turn the entire plot around. For example, Ellie does not confirm to the heroine stereotype at all. She is overweight, solidly built, describes herself as far from beautiful (and that without the usual cliché of it being revealed later in the book that she’s actually a beauty queen who just needs a makeover), and a competent martial artist. The male lead character, Mark, is physically weaker than her, and repeatedly called beautiful.

The book also addresses racial issues, with several characters of mixed (and not always entirely human) heritage. Some of these characters identify at times as Maori and at other times as Pakeha – and occasionally as something else entirely. That gives them a unique view of the world they live in and its true nature, and that worldview is the driving force of the plot.

Maori culture and myths are not the only fount the story draws from. Greek and other myths – and even Shakespeare – also play a part, and together they make a strong statement about the power of stories. They are shown as more than “just” entertaining tales or cultural artifacts. Stories shape the way we see the world, and in doing so, they shape the world itself.

Furthermore, while most of the main characters are magic users, Ellie remains deeply uncomfortable with the concept of controlling others through supernatural powers. She often wrestles with the ethical implications of the evil she has to do to ward off even greater evil. The book addresses the question of what it means to do the right thing without becoming a finger-wagging lecture on morality, and without trying to give simple answers to complicated questions.

All in all, Guardian of the Dead is a great read for anyone who likes stories that are outside the realm of the usual. Setting, characterization and plot are fresh, not formulaic. Nothing in this book goes quite the way readers would expect based on other “magical coming of age” stories. The plot is thoroughly engaging, the prose is strong, and the pacing exciting. And for those who enjoy the book, the author offers enticing extra materials on her webpage, including the playlist of songs she listened to while writing it, a detailed look at part of her world-building process, and the story of a replica of one of the crucial items in the plot.

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Title: Guardian of the Dead
Author: Karen Healey
ISBN: 978-0316044301
Webpage: http://www.karenhealey.com/books/guardian-of-the-dead/
“Now, Governor, you may answer.”

“All right, thank you. First, I’d like to voice my opinion that homosexuality falls into the pool of ethics that is central to the providence of America. Of these ethical concerns, number one and most important for us to embrace is tolerance. Tolerance towards everyone, from Christian to non-Christian, atheist to Muslim; towards every sexual orientation from homosexuality to asexuality; towards foreigners and immigrants from anywhere from Mexico to Zimbabwe; towards all genders from female to male and all in-between; towards every single difference: tolerance to them all I say. Is this ethical? That is subjective, if I may say so Senator and fellow Americans; is it beneficial? Yes. Happy people means productive people, which in turn means a good economy. So, why not be tolerant? By the way Senator, I happen to be one of those 85% of Christians, and I am in full support of granting rights such as gay marriage. Love is love. A couple is a couple. And, while the methods may differ, sex is sex.”

The Senator looked pale. Such a rebuttal was an embarrassment to say the least. He was ready for the next question to redeem himself. Julia however, couldn’t care less about the perverted man’s emotions. She was absorbed in this vibe of social change brought by the Independent.

“Thank you for your responses sirs. Next question: you, far left, second row.”

“My question regards the American female population. While the ethics of tolerating things such as homosexuality and religion both fall into the pool of ethics, what about female equality?”

As the Senator was first to answer the prior question, the Governor began this time.

“I’m very glad this was brought up, and I would’ve brought it up anyways had it not been mentioned.” It was this point at which Julia leaned further forward, as Governor Wright continued.

“In America, only 15-19% of politicians happen to be women. A very lop-sided statistic to say the least. Why is this so? Why do 80% of politicians happen to be men? Is it a matter of interest and intelligence, or is it a matter of opportunities? I am convinced it is the latter. When it comes to providing opportunities to succeed in politics, the odds are highly skewed in the direction of men. This disadvantage, a fine example of inequality mind you, stands in the way of reaching the true potential for which I know America is destined. Only in 1920 was women’s suffrage granted. The time from then till now does not constitute even half of the years our nation has been in existence. This amendment however only achieves equal voting rights. It does not touch the surface of all other aspects of inequality. I am of the opinion that women are just as capable as men, just as intelligent as well, and have the ability to live up to the same potential as men in politics and beyond. However, for all of this to pass, the sexual objectification that has been the result of male dominance must cease. Even today, right before this very debate, I happened to run—well, more accurately collide—with a female of much political ambition. A most beautiful woman, and while her name I will keep to myself, she confessed that she would go into politics were it not a hopeless endeavor. So, instead of living out that dream of hers, she is convinced that it is but a mere figment of her imagination. To live in a nation that had its very foundations built on the creed: “All men are created equal,” and yet, be demotivated by the hypocrisy regarding said creed is pitiful. If we were a true nation under God, this must come to pass: allowing individuals to live up to their dreams, no matter their gender, no matter their race, no matter what minority they
belong to.”

It was at this very instant that Julia fell in love. She could not help it, for there comes a time when the sensations overcome choice itself, and love is one such rare jewel. Void of all else that further occurred, she felt like she had found a soul mate.

The Senator could not believe the blunder his opponent just made. Such radical opinions as he had expressed would be his opponent’s downfall. He felt confident that victory would be his. First, he must seal the deal however.

“Radical opinions, Governor. Perhaps too radical. It is pure speculation however, everything you have said. Sexual objectification? What is that? The cries of a morally decrepit man I say. I have nothing else to add.”

Thus, the debate of social and foreign issues continued. The final questions proved easy for the Senator, and after an hour of arguments back and forth, it came to an end. The Senator, and the Governor Wright, shook hands and wished each other luck.

Joy and a sense of victory coursed through Senator Godwin’s veins. He was confident to say the least. He hastily walked back towards his prep room, to get out of the stuffy black suit he wore.

He had been convinced that he would secure his ascension to Presidency with the conflicts involving the Middle East. On the contrary, this politician whom he had actually thought ingenious, made one major mistake: he actually said what he believed. His radical opinion would isolate him far from the masses. Emotions ran high in the Senator, and he craved something deep down, though he knew not what.

It was in this trance that Julia entered the room. Pacing up and down, the Senator suddenly gazed up at her. He fixed his eyes on her own, which reverberated with a furious sense of passion, all heightened by her fiery scarlet hair. He could not resist what inflamed him, or at least convinced him of such a notion.

The next few minutes could only be described by the purest form of love Julia had never believed to have existed, and a sheer sense of the utmost fear. The love, resulting from the unintended seductiveness over her by Mr. Justin Wright, and the fear, which was evoked by the figure gliding towards her.

Her nervous system shut down, and she was immobile. All the while, she stared dead ahead as the Senator’s arms descended upon her.

As chance would have it, Justin Wright knocked on the door at that exact moment. Governor Wright thought it most kind to speak to the fellow Presidential hopeful face to face. Actually, the true reason was that he had found Julia’s pen from their earlier encounter. It seems neither one noticed it until he was on his way back to the opposite room.

Never did he think anything being out of the ordinary until he heard a loud crash on the other side of the door following his knock. What it was he could only speculate. Despite this, due much to his compassion, he felt obligated to check on the situation.

Only after he opened the door and saw Julia sprawled on the far right side of the room was he grateful to have entered. More than being grateful, however, was the fact that he was angry. Quickly taking note of the disheveled appearance of the secretary, the almost ripped shirt, stretched collar and bra straps, which could be seen, he was at a loss for breath. Instincts, or perhaps his sense of protection, forced him to turn a heated and accusing gaze on the Senator.

The instant Julia saw Justin burst onto the scene, her heart soared from her chest in spite of the situation; one could have compared such emotion to an angel’s descent. Having been jerked into consciousness at the knock, the Senator had shoved her hard smack into the wall. The Governor, who Julia paid infinite attention to, took her state of condition into immediate account. No more than a millisecond did his gaze rest on her now torn and partially unbuttoned shirt. Then, as if it were God’s own wrath, Justin Wright focused a despicable gaze on the
Senator.  
The method in which he stumbled out of the room said it all. He was forced to grip the door as he slid past the Governor, and almost toppled from pure psychological exhaustion.

What happened next for the Senator she would never know, for as soon as he had left the room, she was in Justin’s embrace as he hoisted her up. Shaking her head to clear the clouding sensations she felt at that moment, all she could utter was a question: “Justin?”

“Are you all right?” said his voice, so sweet.  “Justin?” she repeated.

“Yeah, hey. It’s me, Justin Wright, Governor, Presidential nominee.”

“I’m in love.”

“Oh—you mean that was consensual? I just heard a loud noise, so I just thought I’d better be safe than sorry. Doesn’t the Senator have a wife? Of course, I guess that was the reason for his face—.”

“No,” she said. For some reason, she didn’t think the Governor the type of person to kiss. Instead, Julia leaned in and gave him a hug. The simple hug was one of love such that no kiss could rival it.

She was unable to resist clinging to him, and it was only until the gentle push from the Governor that she realized this. She blushed, giving off a sleek smile, trying to hide it by looking downward.

“Julia…” he said, provoking her to make eye contact with him. While her name was all he said, it was evident that this man was very confused.

“I’m sorry.” She began. “What you said during the debate, about women in politics, it was beautiful. It began in the hall. I—I’m not quite sure what happened, but when we bumped into each other…—what went on inside me is most difficult to express. Justin—I can call you Justin right?—Pretend you’re in a completely dark room. You are blinded, searching and feeling around on the wall for something, anything. Then, all of sudden, you feel something—and—and, all of a sudden the dark lit room becomes illuminated in light. You are that light Justin; you were the switch that flipped on inside of me.”

The tears that came to his eyes were much a surprise. It happened to only make her love him more however.

“I see,” he croaked through a now scratchy throat. “Julia, I can’t offer you what some other lucky guy could. I like you as well, I really do. But…”

“But what?” she asked. She wondered what it was he was getting at. Was it about him being a virgin? Maybe he couldn’t be a father? She had to ask: “Does it have anything to do with your virginity?”

Justin could not help but smile at the inquiry from the dazzling being in front of him. “Sort of.”

She recalled a single word; something buried within the other words from earlier.

“If you’re willing to explain it, I’m willing to understand it.”

At that last statement, he wiped his tears away. He had liked her from the start. No doubt about it. He decided, in less than a second of decision making, that she was well worth it.

The torn shirt that revealed the smooth skin underneath, he buttoned up. Then, retrieving the suit that lay across their feet, he took exquisite care to fit it back on her. As she stood gazing at him, he straightened her attire to look as before. Having done this, while still not perfect (for he did not care), he wrapped his arm around her furthest shoulder. With her silky, ruby-red hair drifting over the arm of Justin, Julia reached her closest arm around his midsection. If she had more hands, she’d be holding his, squeezing it tightly.
It Just Can’t
Poem by: Arielle

I never felt this way
About a guy before
I know that sounds typical
Like a worn out cliché but yet it’s true
I might have said I liked other guys that way before
But they were faked to fit in, they had a forced ring to it
Till I met you

Though we haven’t shared a class in three years
We always somehow meet
And though I felt this for you only a year
I was going to ask you two years prior to go to a dance as friends
But already filled with two “no’s from other boys, I chickened out
Besides the fact I hardly knew you as well then

The more I get to know you
The better it gets
We have so much in common it’s freaky
It’s like we’re almost twins
In my dreams you have no commitments to another girl
And you feel the same way as I do about you
I would hold your hand and you would do the same
And give me a kiss
And go to dinner
And to dances
And to movies
And watch our favorite shows together
That would be great

We would talk all the time
Till the sun went down
And never run out of conversation
Because that hasn’t happened before

But that is all a dream
It will never be real
As much as I want it to be
It seems like it just can’t happen

Author’s note: I wrote this poem for creative writing before I knew I was asexual, but I was at the beginning trying to explain (in poem form) how I never had a crush before.
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